

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2010

PRESENT:- Councillors Garry Perkins (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Brian Mattock, David Renard, Jim Grant, Derique Montaut and Peter Mallinson (Deputy).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roderick Bluh (Chair) and Stan Pajak.

The Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Rex Barnett, and Councillors Doreen Dart and Kevin Small attended the meeting in respect of Minute 9.

6. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

7. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

8. Public Question Time

The following question was asked in accordance with Standing Order 28.

Questioner

Mr. Tim French, Cassan Road, Swindon

There is on occasion a problem with the availability of ward councillors to attend community meetings held in their wards. It is recognised that councillors have many demands on their time. The Boundary Commission Electoral Review will look at the size of the Borough and at the numbers of Councillors required, and it will eventually determine how many councillors there should be to serve their communities. Can the Committee advise on what happens when the Boundary Commission makes its views known, and how the Council and the public are able to respond?

Response

The Chair thanked Mr. French for his question and asked the Director of Law and Democratic Services to respond. The Director explained the consultation process associated with the Electoral Review of Swindon and that both the Council and the public were able to make submissions and representations at each of the three stages of the process. Following that process, the Commission's final recommendations would be published in July 2011.

Councillor Derique Montaut commented that the majority of councillors, and certainly he and his fellow ward councillors, always attempted to attend community meetings. He believed that the Council's proposed submission to the Boundary Commission and, in particular, the Labour Group's submission highlighted the time taken to fulfil the role of being a Swindon Councillor. He believed that, ultimately, the

electorate would decide through the ballot box if they believed a local councillor was not showing commitment to the community they served.

9. Draft Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report setting out a proposed draft Submission by the Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on Council Size that was being undertaken as part of its Electoral Boundary Review of Swindon. The Corporate Governance Review Working Party, at a meeting held immediately prior to the Committee, had previously considered the draft submission.

The Chair referred to the discussions that had taken place at the Corporate Governance Review Working Party and to the minor drafting changes to be made by the Director of Law and Democratic Services to the proposed draft Submission. He confirmed that, in accordance with the recommendation of the Working Party, the submission would be based on the Council size remaining at 59.

Councillor Kevin Small referred to the Labour Group's proposed submission based on a Council size of between 60 and 62 councillors, and to the discussions that had taken place at the Working Group. In recognising that the Committee was unlikely to support the Labour Group's proposal, he asked if the Committee would be prepared to include reference in the proposed Council submission to the rationale behind that proposal? The Chair advised that he and his group had considerable sympathy with the rationale behind the Labour Group proposal, if not with its conclusion of the need for an increase in Council membership. He therefore had no objection to this view being reflected in the final submission.

Resolved – That, on behalf of Full Council, the Director of Law and Democratic Services be authorised to

- Submit to the Local Government Boundary Commission the Council's response to the Commission's consultation on Council size, which had been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Review Working Group;
- Make such amendments and corrections to the Council's Submission prior to dispatch, as may be deemed necessary following the discussions at the Corporate Governance Review Working Group.

(Councillor James Grant and Councillor Derique Montaut requested that their abstention from voting on this item be recorded.)